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Last Arab League Session in Cairo

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Note: Despite the fact that some of this information has already been reported in the press and on the radio, this report is being distributed in its entirety to present the complete picture.

- The Arab League Council held its first meeting at the chancery of the Egyptian Ministry for Foreign Affairs under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Riyad Bey Sulh, Prime Minister of Lebanon and head of the Lebanese delegation. The meeting was attended by:

His Excellency Mahmud Fahmi Nuqrashi Pasha, Prime Minister of Egypt and head of the Egyptian delegation, with the Egyptian delegates;

His Excellency Jamil Mardam Bey, Prime Minister of Syria and head of the Syrian delegation, with the Syrian delegates;

Hamdi Pachachi, Foreign Minister of Iraq, with the Iraqi delegates;

Sheikh Yusuf Yasin, representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia;

Hasan Ibrahim, representative of the Trans-Jordan Hashimite Kingdom;

Ali Mu'ayyid, representing the Kingdom of Yemen.

Following the opening of the session, the Council discussed the agenda, headed by the Palestine question. After this subject was discussed, it was decided to refer projects received by the Secretariat to the appropriate committees either for discussion or for making the necessary recommendations therefor, provided that the Council would then debate and decide on them. The session then ended.

The Question of Establishing a Palestinian Government

- On the afternoon of 3 February, the Arab League Political Committee, comprising the Foreign Ministers of the Arab States and their representatives, met at the chancery of the Foreign Office under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Riyad Bey Sulh, with Jamil Mardam Bey, Ahmad Khashaba Pasha, Yusuf Yasin, Ali Mu'ayyid, Hasan Ibrahim and Hamdi Pachachi, as members.

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The Palestine question was then submitted for discussion. The members listened to the statements of Abd al-Rahman Azzam, the Secretary General, and to the viewpoints of the various representatives of the Arab states. Syria's delegate suggested the formation of a governmental body in Palestine to deal with the political, military, economic and administrative affairs of the whole of Palestine. This was opposed by the Trans-Jordanian delegate, supported by the Iraqi representative, who pointed out that the establishment of a Palestinian Government is to be decided by a plebiscite of the people of Palestine and not by others. After this proposal was discussed, it was decided to abandon it temporarily.

Representation of Palestine

3. A proposal was then submitted for discussion regarding Palestine's representation in the Arab League. The debate on this subject then developed until the session ended without results. It was decided to reconvene on the afternoon of 10 February.
4. The Political Committee met on the specified date, and the discussions resumed their first line on the question of Palestine. It was decided, after the debate, to invite General Ismail Safwat Pasha, in his capacity as Commander of the Palestine Army of Liberation, who was in Cairo upon the invitation of the League's Secretariat, to comment on the situation in Palestine from the political and military standpoints. The Political Committee found, after the General made his statements, that there were undefined relations causing differences of opinion among the members of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, the perpetuation of which would weaken and harm the Palestine cause. It was then unanimously decided to clear the atmosphere among the members of this body. It was also unanimously decided, upon the proposal of the Syrian Government, to accept Palestine's representation at the meetings of the League's Council and its committees, because such a measure would remove misunderstandings, coordinate the efforts of the Arab countries, and strengthen their position vis-a-vis international opinion.

Differences on the Names of Palestine's Representatives

5. The differences reappeared among the members of the Political Committee when they discussed the names of the proposed representatives of Palestine to the League Council. The Trans-Jordanian delegation expressed opposition to and consternation at the election of Hajj Amin Husayni as representative of Palestine. He was supported by the Iraqi delegate. The intervention of Riyadh Sulh, Chairman of the Committee, in this matter prevented the development of the differences among the members of the Political Committee, and they relaxed their opposition to the acceptance of the Mufti. The meeting was then adjourned.

Differences of the Members of the Arab Higher Committee

6. No sooner were the differences among the members of the Political Committee in regard to the Mufti's candidacy about to be settled when new differences appeared among the members of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee itself concerning the recommendation of the Mufti as the representative for Palestine. The differences in the viewpoints of the members of the Arab Committee became clearly evident. After two consecutive meetings of the Political Committee to settle these differences, the Committee was able to find a settlement acceptable to the members of the Arab Higher Committee. Thereupon the Political Committee adopted a recommendation for accepting the representation of Palestine at the meetings of Arab League Council, provided that the Palestinian delegation be composed of Hajj Amin Husayni, Jamal Husayni and Mu'in Madhi.

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Palestinian Government or the Political Committee of the Arab League

7. During the subsequent meeting of the Political Committee, discussions were renewed on the creation of a governmental body for Palestine, or a provisional body to supervise various Palestinian affairs until the establishment of a Palestinian Government becomes possible in the full sense of the word. After debating this subject, it was decided that the Political Committee of the Arab League should have the right to supervise various Palestinian affairs and be regarded as the sole body responsible for everything relating to the Palestine question. The Committee passed such a resolution and the meeting was then adjourned.

Military Committee for Palestine

8. The Political Committee met on the following day and discussed military matters connected with the Palestine question. General Ismail Safwat Pasha was asked to attend and give his military views, such as the unification of the body which would take charge of arms importation, supervise the volunteer movement, and help provision the Army of Liberation. After listening to General Safwat's statements, it was decided to form a semi-regular army from volunteers released from regular forces of the Arab countries, provided that the general command be entrusted to General Ismail Safwat. The creation of a committee was also proposed, to be called the Military Committee, and formed from military bodies representing the various Arab countries, to be attached to the Political Committee and to submit all its decisions to that Committee. All the members approved this proposal, but the Saudi Arabian delegate regretted that his country could not send a representative to the Committee. His excuse was accepted and the Political Committee adopted a resolution on these recommendations.

Members of the Military Committee

9. The Military Committee was formed of General Ismail Safwat Pasha representing Iraq; Subhi Khadra representing Palestine; Commandant Shawkat Shukayr representing Lebanon; and Taha Harb Pasha, or whoever is delegated by the Egyptian Chief of Staff, representing Egypt; and General Abd-al-Qadir Jurdi representing Trans-Jordan. This Committee is to meet in one of the Arab capitals under the chairmanship of Azzam Pasha or his representative when it is found necessary to coordinate all Palestinian affairs.

Syria to buy Arms from Czechoslovakia

10. During the subsequent meetings of the Political Committee, the recommendations of the Military Committee for providing arms for the Palestine Army of Liberation and the places from which such arms could be obtained were discussed.
11. These recommendations revealed that it was possible to obtain various types of weapons from Czechoslovakia, which had offered large quantities of various types of arms. But the Czechoslovak factories cannot effect the transactions unless a legal government represents the importing country. After exchanging views on this matter, the delegate of the Syrian Government proposed that the Syrian Government would conclude contracts with the Czechoslovak interested parties to obtain the arms and ammunition necessary for the Palestine Army of Liberation in the name of the Syrian Government. This proposal was unanimously adopted and the Committee adopted a resolution therefor.

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Facilitating the Smuggling of Arms Into Palestine

12. After a discussion of the Military Committee's recommendation, the Iraqi delegate made a proposal concerning the necessity for all the Arab countries and their governments to take measures facilitating the delivery of various types of arms to Palestine and to the Army of Liberation. It was unanimously decided to accept this proposal and a resolution was adopted therefor.

The Question of Contributions and the Lebanese Government

13. The question of contributions and assistance to Palestine was submitted to the Political Committee for discussion. After this question was discussed, the members of the Committee found out that the only country which did its duty toward Palestine and to the Arab League Council from the standpoint of contributions and the payment of its share to the League was the Lebanese Government. The Committee then adopted a resolution to the effect that the Arab League Council should take the necessary decision, urging each Arab country which is a member of the League to do its duty to Palestine and to the League Council.

Decisions of the Second Session of the League Council

14. When the Political Committee discontinued its meetings, the League Council held a second session during which the decisions of the Political Committee were submitted for discussion.

The Council finally decided the following:

a. Palestine's Representation on the League's Council

It was decided to accept the representation of Palestine in the meetings of the Arab League Council and to convey this decision to the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, provided that the Palestine delegation shall have the right to join the debates of the League Council without the right to vote on the decisions taken therein.

Following this decision and its transmittal to the Arab Higher Committee, the Palestinian delegation was immediately formed with Haj Amin Husayni as President, and Jamal Husayni, Mu'in Madhi, Rafiq Tamimi, and Emile Khuri as members. The delegates then entered the meeting hall and as soon as the Palestinian delegates took their seats, Riyadh Sulh, the Chairman of the Council, made a speech welcoming the Mufti and the members of the Palestinian delegation; he referred to the high aims which the Arab League was endeavoring to attain for maintaining the Arabism and independence of Palestine. The Mufti answered him, thanking the Arab League for its continued efforts and for its assistance to the Arabs of Palestine.

b. The Abandonment of the Formation of a Palestine Government

The Council decided to abandon the creation of a Palestine Government and to regard the Political Committee of the Arab League as temporarily acting in the place of such a Government. Thus it will represent Palestine and will be solely responsible for decisions relating to the Palestine question until it becomes possible to establish a Government chosen by the people of Palestine.

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c. Military Committee

The formation of a Military Committee for Palestine was decided upon, comprising military representatives from all the Arab countries, to operate together with the Political Committee and to refer its decisions to the last-mentioned Committee.

d. Purchase of Arms from Czechoslovakia

It was decided to purchase arms and ammunition needed by the Palestine Army of Liberation from Czechoslovakia, provided that the transactions would be effected in the name of the Syrian Government.

e. Facilitating Smuggling of Arms into Palestine

The recommendations of the Military Committee for facilitating the smuggling of arms and ammunition to the Palestine Army of Liberation from the various Arab countries were approved.

Petroleum Agreements

15. After completing the decisions on the recommendations of the Political Committee there was submitted for discussion the question of canceling petroleum agreements and economic treaties concluded between the Arab countries and the powers supporting the partition of Palestine. A sharp debate ensued on the subject, during which the Palestinian delegation urged the necessity of taking a unanimous decision on this matter, because it would stop the partition plan.
16. King Ibn Saud's delegate opposed this motion and adhered to his previous stand on this proposal, citing the economic injuries from which his country would suffer, and because His Majesty King Ibn Saud feels that the American companies have nothing to do with political matters. He said that there were Arab countries which have not abrogated their economic and petroleum treaties with the powers supporting partition. He demanded that these powers take the initiative. He was supported by the delegate of the Syrian Government who proposed that it was the right of Saudi Arabia to cancel any concessions given to American companies on the basis of the principle adopted at the Havana Conference. The Saudi Arabian delegate, however, opposed this proposal and no decision was therefore taken thereon. In this connection, the Syrian delegate suggested that no economic or petroleum agreement be signed with any foreign country supporting partition from now on. This proposal was then unanimously adopted.

Negative Attitude toward America

17. Here the Syrian delegate deemed it advisable to propose the adoption of a negative attitude toward American petroleum and economic interests in the various Arab countries until the American Government changed its attitude toward partition, provided that the Arab countries implement this decision from the date of its adoption, and that this be recommended to League member states. The Council unanimously decided upon the adoption of this proposal and its conveyance to those concerned after it was debated and supported by the representatives of Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Palestine.

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Tapline

18. At the request of the Lebanese delegate, the question of Tapline was then submitted for discussion as well as that of the construction of pipelines across Trans-Jordan or Egypt in the event that the Syrian Government refuses to permit the passage of pipelines through its territories.
19. After debating this proposal, the Council adopted a unanimous resolution providing that the Arab states adhere to one policy toward petroleum matters, especially toward this company. This project should not be discussed nor accepted prior to receiving the approval of all the Arab countries unless the American Government ceased its support for partition. In this last event, the Syrian and Lebanese Governments would have the right to benefit from the passage of the aforementioned oil pipelines through their territories.

The Volunteering of Foreigners in the Palestine Army of Liberation

20. The proposal of the Palestine delegation which provides for the acceptance of foreign volunteers in the Arab Army of Liberation was then submitted. After a brief debate, this proposal was unanimously adopted. The meeting was then adjourned, to reconvene later for the purpose of examining the recommendations which might be received by the Secretariat.

Recommendations of Cultural Committee to League Council

21. [REDACTED] the League Council reconvened at the chancery of the Egyptian Foreign Office. At the opening of the session, His Excellency the Chairman of the Council announced the death of His Majesty Imam Yahya, King of Yemen. He said: "With deep regret I announce to you the death of His Majesty, the King of Yemen. I can but mention the Imam's strong faith and Arab pride. He struggled and fought against every foreigner who wanted to conquer and exploit his country. He resisted all the forces which gathered against him, thus saving the Arabism of this part of the Arab world." His Excellency then concluded his eulogy by asking that the Council's meeting be suspended five minutes in His Majesty's memory. Thereupon, Ali al-Mu'ayyid, Yemen's delegate, thanked the Council for its sentiments toward Yemen and toward its departed sovereign.
22. This was followed by the submission to the Council of the recommendations of the Cultural Committee, the aims of which are as follows:
 - a. Unification of Curricula for the Arabic Language, etc.
The Council decided to approve the decisions of the Cultural Committee which aim at unifying the curricula for the Arab language, history, geography, and archaeology.
 - b. Arab News Company
The Council adopted the idea of establishing a company for Arab news and of attempting to ensure its success.
 - c. Refugees
The Council also looked into the question of refugees from all over the world and referred it to the member states for study, provided that the results of such study be submitted at the next session of the League.

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d. Economic Coordination

The Council approved the question of economic coordination with the UN, provided that this be realized within the limits explained to the representatives of the League states at the UN.

e. Unification of the Currency

The Council deemed it advisable to refer this recommendation to the League's Secretariat General with the hope of studying it with technical experts and in the light of pertinent reports.

23. Recommendations of the Political Committee

a. Tax for the Destitute of Palestine

The Council decided to refer the Committee's recommendation for the imposition of a tax for the destitute of Palestine to the member states, so that each one of them may implement this recommendation.

b. Popular Contributions for the Aid of Palestine

The Council heard the Committee's decision which urges the Arab Governments to supervise popular contributions collected in their countries for the aid of Palestine and to give them the proper direction. All such contributions must be remitted to the Palestine aid fund in the Secretariat General, and its use must be subject to the rules governing the use of other funds allotted for the assistance of Palestine. Contributions made for special purposes will be credited to a special account which will be opened by the Secretariat General.

The Question of Libya

24. The Council adopted the recommendation of the Political Committee confirming its former resolutions for the unity of the three parts (Barqa, Tripoli, Fezzan) of Libya, its complete independence, and for the formation of a committee by the Secretariat General to submit a memorandum embodying the League's views to the Investigating Committee.

The Question of the Maghreb

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Note: This probably refers to all French North Africa, not just Morocco.

25. The Council expressed its regret because the powers controlling the Maghreb have not taken positive steps toward recognizing the rights of the people of the Maghreb. It also expressed regret over the bloody incidents which take place from time to time. The Council will endeavor to help them in realizing their aims, to extend every possible assistance and to appropriate adequate sums for combating the famine in these parts.

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The Press

26. The Council decided that the governments should adopt the necessary legislation and administrative measures to prevent the publication of news on the defense of Palestine in the press, except those announced by the appropriate authorities.

Conclusion of Last Arab League Session

27. His Excellency, the Chairman of the Council, then announced the conclusion of the seventh ordinary term, during which he said that the Council had recorded most of its chapters with courage and energy.

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